

**SYSTEM, METHOD, AND PROGRAM FOR MANAGING A USER KEY USED
TO SIGN A MESSAGE FOR A DATA PROCESSING SYSTEM**

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Technical Field:

The present invention relates in general to data processing, and, in particular, to a system, method, and program for providing data security. Still more particularly, the present invention relates to a system, method, and program for managing a user key used to sign a message for a data processing system.

2. Description of the Related Art:

Cryptography involves encrypting data to provide security for the data. For example, before transmission of a message from one party to another, the message may be encrypted using a mathematical function known as a cryptographic algorithm. The most common cryptographic algorithms are key-based, where special knowledge of variable information called a "key" is required to decrypt an encrypted message. Two prevalent types of key-based cryptographic algorithms exist, namely, *symmetric key* (or secret key) algorithms and *public key* (asymmetric key) algorithms. The security provided by these cryptographic algorithms is centered around the keys and not the details of the cryptographic algorithms. In other words, the cryptographic algorithms can typically be known to all, but the keys can only be known by authorized parties. As a result, the cryptographic algorithm may be published for public scrutiny and then mass produced for incorporation

into security products.

5 In most symmetric key algorithms, the encryption key
and the decryption key are the same secret key. The
sender and recipient of a message must be able to exchange
information regarding the secret key, and each party must
trust the other not to disclose the secret key. The
sender must communicate the key through another relatively
secure communication path. With public key algorithms,
10 the key used for encryption is different from the key used
for decryption. The decryption key is difficult to
calculate from an encryption key. In a typical operation,
the public key used for encryption is made public via a
readily accessible directory, while the corresponding
15 private key used for decryption is known only to the
recipient of the encrypted message. In an exemplary
public key transaction, a sender retrieves the recipient's
public key and uses it to sign the message prior to
sending the message. The recipient then receives and
20 decrypts the encrypted message with the corresponding
private key. Encrypting a message using a private key and
decrypting the encrypted message using a public key, which
is sometimes used in digital signatures to authenticate
the source of a message, are possible.

25 One of the more popular public key algorithms is RSA
(named after its inventors Rivest, Shamir, and Adleman).
With RSA, when a message is encrypted utilizing a user
public key, the encrypted message may only be decrypted
30 utilizing a user private key. In one implementation, each
user private key is also associated with a password, and
both are enclosed within an individual secure wrapper.
All user private keys along with their respective

passwords are stored in a protected storage area within an encryption/decryption device, such as an encryption chip. In order to allow the encryption chip to perform an authentication procedure, such as signing signatures, a user must provide a correct password to the encryption chip. For security purposes, copies of any user private key must not exist outside the secure wrapper. Thus, a user private key and its respective password can only be unwrapped inside the encryption chip, leaving no opportunity for the password to be changed.

Public-private key cryptography allows messages to be digitally signed. A sender may publish his decryption key as a public key and maintain his encryption key secret as a private key. If the sender encrypts a message using the private key, then anyone receiving the message is able to decrypt the message using the sender's public key. In doing so, the recipients are able to verify that the message was encrypted by the sender since he is the sole possessor of the private key. The sender has, in effect, digitally signed the message. An alternative way of digitally signing a message involves the use of a hashing function, which is also known as a "message digest" or "fingerprint" algorithm. A message is hashed using a cryptographic hash function. The cryptographic hash function maps an arbitrary-length message to a fixed number of bits. The hashed message or hash is then encrypted. Digitally signing a message using the hashing function is generally a two-step process. The first step involves hashing the message and encrypting the hashed message using a private key. The message is transmitted along with the encrypted hash from the sender to the recipient. The second step involves the verification of

the signature. The recipient hashes the received message, decrypts the received, encrypted hash with the associated public key and compares the pair of hashed values. The signature is valid if the two hashed values match.

5 Otherwise, the message was somehow altered during transmission.

Certification is the process of binding a key, such as a public key or private key, to an individual, organization, entity, or piece of information, such as a permission or credential. A certificate is a collection of information that has been digitally signed by a certificate issuer. The certificate issuer is a party who issues a key to a person, organization, entity, or piece of information and manages the validity of the issued key. If a user is no longer permitted to use a key, the certificate issuer needs to revoke the certificate for the user's key by publishing the certificate for the key on a certificate revocation list ("CRL"). However, a time gap typically exists between when a certificate issuer receives a notification that a certificate for a key should be revoked and when the certificate issuer publishes the certificate of the key on the next CRL. This time gap results in what is known as the CRL time-granularity problem. During this time period, the user may attempt to use the key to engage in unauthorized transactions and communications that should have been invalidated by the revocation of the key and the certificate for the key. The user may then continue to sign messages and communicate without proper authority. The present invention recognizes the need and desire to resolve this problem.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

5 A system, method, and program for managing a user key used to sign a message for a data processing system having an encryption chip are disclosed. A user is assigned a user key. In order to encrypt and send messages to a recipient(s), the messages are encrypted with the user key. The user key, in turn, is encrypted with an associated key. The associated key is further encrypted using an encryption chip key stored on the encryption chip. The encrypted messages are communicated to a recipient to validate an association of the user with the encrypted messages. The associated key is decrypted with the encryption chip key. The user key is decrypted with the associated key, and the messages are decrypted with the user key. Thereafter, validation of the association of messages with the user is removed by revoking the associated key.

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20 In a preferred embodiment, encryption resources are centralized in a server system having the encryption chip. The server system is coupled to and provides encryption services to a plurality of client systems. Messages to be encrypted are sent from a user's client system to the server system, which encrypts the messages using the encryption chip. The encrypted messages are sent from the server system to the client system, which then transmits the encrypted messages to their intended recipient(s). All data relating to the encrypted messages are erased from the server system after the encrypted messages are sent from the server system to the client system.

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The above as well as additional objects, features,

and advantages of the present invention will become apparent in the following detailed written description.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The novel features believed characteristic of the invention are set forth in the appended claims. The invention itself however, as well as a preferred mode of use, further objects and advantages thereof, will best be understood by reference to the following detailed description of an illustrative embodiment when read in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

Figure 1 is an exemplary block diagram of a data processing system that implements the present invention;

Figure 2 is an exemplary block diagram of a data processing sub-system, which may be the client system or server system of **Figure 1**, that implements the present invention;

Figure 3 is a flow chart of an exemplary method and program executed by the data processing system of **Figure 1** for encrypting messages in accordance with the present invention; and

Figure 4 is a flow chart of an exemplary method and program executed by the data processing system of **Figure 1** for decrypting messages in accordance with the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF ILLUSTRATIVE EMBODIMENT

5 In conventional computer systems,
encryption/decryption of messages are preformed utilizing
an internal encryption chip that stores both the
encryption/decryption algorithms and a key or key pair
used by the encryption chip to encrypt and decrypt data.
In a network environment each computer's encryption chip
performs the same basic encryption/decryption functions,
10 which invites the consolidation of the
encryption/decryption function at a centralized location
in order to reduce expense and management and enhance
physical security.

15 However, centralization of encryption and decryption
services at an encryption server can lead to various
problems. One problem is that very secure communication
must be established between each client system and
encryption the server. Otherwise, unauthorized persons
20 may gain illicit entry to and illegally decrypt encrypted
data communicated between the client systems and the
encryption server. Another problem that arises is
difficulty in key management. A client system is assigned
a key that is provided to the user of that client system.
25 Various keys for various client systems are used and
managed by the single encryption server. However, if the
issued key for a particular client system needs to be
revoked, the user may maintain a copy of the revoked key
and thereby gain unlawful access to encrypted data by
30 simply logging into the encryption server from a remote
client system. The present invention consolidates the
encryption/decryption operations of data to a centralized
location while avoiding the problems associated with
centralizing the encryption/decryption operations.

With reference now to **Figure 1**, an exemplary block diagram of a data processing system **100** that implements the present invention is shown. Data processing system **100** includes client systems **102A**, **102B**, and **102C** coupled in communication with a server system **104**. Communication between client systems **102A**, **102B**, and **102C** and server system **104** is conducted via a secure communication link, such as a Secure Sockets Layer ("SSL") connection. SSL is a standard developed by Netscape Communications for establishing secure communication channels between devices to avoid interception and unauthorized access of critical or sensitive data. Client system **102A** has a memory system **103A** and a central processing unit (CPU) **114A**, which are coupled to each other. Similarly, client system **102B** includes a memory system **103B** and a CPU **114B**, and client system **102C** contains a memory system **103C** and a CPU **114C**. User 1 uses client system **102A**, and user 2 utilizes client system **102B**. Furthermore, user 3 uses client system **102C**. The term "user" is understood to mean a person, a service, an application, a device, or any other entity that may access an application. The term "user" is not limited to a human user.

Server system **104** has a memory device **105** and a CPU **116**, which are coupled to each other as well. Server system **104** further includes an encryption chip **106**. Encryption chip **106**, which is coupled in communication with CPU **116** and memory device **105**, contains an encryption/decryption engine ("ENG") **118** and a protected storage ("PS") area **120**. Encryption/decryption engine **118** implements an encryption/decryption algorithm that encodes and decodes messages transmitted and received by client systems **102A**, **102B**, and **102C**, in accordance with the

present invention.

In **Figure 1**, users 1, 2, and 3 utilize data processing system **100** to encrypt messages, such as to sign messages, that are then electronically transmitted to a recipient **112** through a recipient system **110**. The present invention preferably implements a public/private key encryption and decryption scheme. Key 1, which includes a public key 1 ("PUK1") and a private key 1 ("PRK1"), is a user key assigned to user 1. Key 1 is stored in memory system **103A**. Also, key 2, which includes a public key 2 ("PUK2") and a private key 2 ("PRK2"), is issued as the user key for user 2, and key 2 is stored in memory system **103B**. Additionally, key 3, which includes a public key 3 ("PUK3") and a private key 3 ("PRK3"), is assigned as the user key for user 3. Key 3 is stored in memory system **103C**. When data processing system **100** performs encryption/decryption operations, keys 1, 2, and/or 3 are sent to protected storage area **120** of server system **104**.

Protected storage area **120** may be implemented with an electronically erasable storage device. Protected storage area **120** encompasses memory device **105** and an encryption chip key **107** ("ECK"). Protected storage area **120** stores the user public/private key pairs. User public/private key pairs sent to and/or stored within protected storage area **120** are protected by encryption/decryption engine **118** and are not directly accessible to server system **104** or its other components.

In server system **104**, keys A, B, and C (also referred to as "associated keys") are stored in memory device **105**. Key A contains a public key A ("PUKA") and a private key A

("PRKA"), and key A is an associated key that is specifically associated with key 1. Key B includes a public key B ("PUKB") and a private key B ("PRKB"), and key B is an associated key that is particularly associated with key 2. Also, key C contains a public key C ("PUKC") and a private key C ("PRKC"), and key C is an associated key that is associated with key 3. ECK **107** has a public ECK ("PUECK") and a private ECK ("PRECK") and is utilized to encrypt associated key A, B, or C, and associated keys A, B, and C in turn are respectively utilized to encrypt user keys 1, 2, and 3. User keys 1, 2, and 3 encrypt or sign messages sent by users 1, 2, and 3, respectively.

As stated earlier, certification is the process of binding a key, such as a public key or private key, to an individual, organization, entity, or piece of information, such as a permission or credential. A certificate is a collection of information that has been digitally signed by a certificate issuer. A certificate may be established within a client system, such as client system **102A**, **102B**, or **102C**, for a user, such as user 1, 2, or 3, to access a particular application. The certificate may be specifically established for and associated with a particular user and a particular application. The certificate preferably includes a pointer to its associated application, an identity of the user associated with this certificate, and a pointer to the user private key associated with the user of this certificate and application. When an application needs to transmit an encrypted message or to perform an authentication procedure, encryption/decryption engine **118** accesses the user private key pointed to by the application's associated certificate, and then encrypts the message or generates a digital signature utilizing the user private

key.

5 The certificate issuer is a person who issues a key and manages the validity of the key issued to a person, organization, entity, or piece of information. The keys for data processing system **100** are issued by a certificate issuer(s). The certificate issuer manages the validity of the keys by issuing certificates that validate the use of the keys. If a key is to be revoked, then the certificate issuer revokes the key by publishing the certificate for the key on a certificate revocation list. Users 1, 2, and 3 are the certificate users who use the certificates.

15 Referring now to **Figure 2**, a block diagram of a computer system **10**, which may be client system **102A**, **102B**, or **102C** or server system **104**, in which a preferred embodiment of the present invention is implemented is shown. As shown, a processor (CPU) **12**, a read-only memory (ROM) **13**, and a random access memory (RAM) **14** are connected to a system bus **11** of a computer system **10**. CPU **12** may be CPU **114A**, **114B**, or **114C** for respective client system **102A**, **102B**, or **102C** or may be CPU **116** for server system **104**. CPU **12**, ROM **13**, and RAM **14** are also coupled to a PCI bus **20** of computer system **10** through a PCI host bridge **15**. PCI host bridge **15** provides a low latency path through which CPU **12** may directly access PCI devices mapped anywhere within bus memory and/or I/O address spaces. PCI host bridge **15** also provides a high bandwidth path allowing PCI devices to directly access RAM **14**.

30 Also attached to PCI bus **20** is a local-area network (LAN) interface **16** and a small computer system interface (SCSI) **18**. LAN interface **16** connects computer system **10**

to LAN 17. SCSI 18 is utilized to control a high-speed SCSI disk drive 19. Expansion bus bridge 45, such as a PCI-to-ISA bus bridge, may be utilized to couple an ISA bus 25 to PCI bus 20. As shown, a keyboard 26, a microphone 27, a mouse 28, and a storage device 29 may be attached to ISA bus 25 to perform basic I/O functions. Storage device 29 may be memory system 103A, 103B, or 103C for respective client system 102A, 102B, or 102C or may be memory device 105 for server system 104. In addition, an audio adapter 23 and a graphics adapter 21 may be attached to PCI bus 20. Graphics adapter 21 controls visual output through a display monitor 22 and audio adapter 23 controls audio output through a speaker 24.

With reference now to **Figures 3** and **4**, flow charts of exemplary methods 300 and 400 and programs executed by data processing system 100 for encrypting and decrypting messages in accordance with the present invention are shown. Methods 300 and 400 will be discussed in conjunction with an example for digitally signing a message hashed by a cryptographic function. The hashed message is sent by user 1 and encrypted and decrypted by methods 300 and 400 utilizing user key 1, associated key A, and ECK 107. Methods 300 and 400 are not in any way limited to this exemplary application. Methods 300 and 400 encrypt and decrypt messages in the same manner for users 2 and 3 using user keys 2 and 3, associated keys B and C, and ECK 107. Methods 300 and 400 may be used to encrypt/decrypt any suitable messages.

As shown in **Figure 3**, method 300 for encrypting messages in accordance with the present invention starts

at block **302**. Method **300** next moves to block **304**, which illustrates user 1 being assigned user key 1. User 1 uses user key 1 to encrypt or sign messages that are processed by data processing system **100**. Following block **304**, block **305** shows a message sent by user 1 being hashed by a cryptographic hash function in client system **102A**. Method **300** next moves to block **306**, which shows that the hashed message is encrypted with user key 1 in client system **102A**.

Following block **306**, block **308** depicts the hashed message encrypted by PRK1 of user key 1 being sent from client system **102A** to server system **104**. The encrypted, hashed message includes the identity of user key 1, which is, in effect, transmitted from client system **102A** to server system **104** when the encrypted, hashed message is sent. Any personal identification numbers (PINs) or passwords associated with using user key 1 are also sent from client system **102A** to server system **104**. User key 1 and all associated PINs or passwords, if any, are received and securely maintained within protected storage area **120** of server system **104**.

Method **300** then moves to blocks **310**, **312**, and **314**. Block **310** illustrates server system **104** encrypting user key 1 with PRKA of associated key A stored in server system **104**. Following block **310**, block **312** shows server system **104** encrypting associated key A with PRECK of ECK **107**. Method **300** next proceeds to block **314**, which depicts server system **104** sending the encrypted, hashed message, encrypted user key 1, and encrypted associated key A to client system **102A**.

Method **300** moves from block **314** to block **316**, which shows that any trace of the encrypted, hashed message, user key 1, and the associated PINs/passwords are erased from server system **104**. Following block **316**, block **318** shows client system **102A** electronically transmitting the encrypted, hashed message in conjunction with encrypted user key 1 and encrypted associated key A to a recipient system **110**. The encrypted message includes the original message. Recipient system **110** receives the encrypted, hashed message (which includes the message of user 1 whether tampered with or not), encrypted user key 1, and encrypted associated key A. Recipient **112** uses recipient system **110** to decrypt the encrypted, hashed message in order to validate an association of user 1 with the encrypted, hashed message.

Method **300** then proceeds to block **320**. Block **320** illustrates that if revocation of user key 1 for user 1 is desired (e.g., user 1 is no longer employed at the company maintaining data processing system **100** and validation of user key 1 needs to be revoked), then validation of encrypted, hashed messages associated with user 1 can be prevented by revoking associated key A on server system **104**. Associated keys, such as associated keys A, B, and C, are never used outside of server system **104** and are generally only accessed and managed by an authorized system administrator. Associated key A may be revoked by simply erasing it from server system **104**. Since associated key A is revoked and no longer exists in server system **104**, then ECK **107** does not have an associated key to decrypt, and encrypted user key 1, in turn, cannot be decrypted since associated key A does not exist to decrypt user key 1. Method **300** finally ends at block **322**.

In **Figure 4**, method **400** for decrypting messages in accordance with the present invention starts at block **402**. Method **400** proceeds from block **402** to block **403**, which depicts communication being established and maintained between data processing system **100** and recipient system **110**. Following block **403**, block **404** illustrates recipient system **110** receiving from client system **102A** the encrypted, hashed message, encrypted user key 1, and encrypted associated key A. Recipient **112** uses recipient system **110** to validate an association of user 1 with the encrypted, hashed message.

Method **400** then proceeds to blocks **408**, **410**, and **412**. Block **408** represents recipient system **110** decrypting encrypted associated key A by accessing and using PUECK of ECK **107**. Block **410** illustrates recipient system **110** decrypting encrypted user key 1 by accessing and using PUKA of associated key A. Block **412** shows recipient system **110** decrypting the encrypted, hashed message by accessing and using PUK1 of user key 1. Method **400** next proceeds to block **414**, which depicts recipient system **110** accessing and using the same cryptographic hash function used by client system **102A** to hash the message attached to the encrypted, hashed message received from user 1 through client system **102A**.

Method **400** then moves to decision block **416**, which shows a determination of whether the hashed message generated by recipient system **110** is the same as the decrypted hashed message. If a determination is made at decision block **416** that the hashed messages are the same, then method **400** proceeds from decision block **416** to block **418**, which depicts recipient system **110** notifying

recipient **112** that the received message is valid and is verified as being sent from user 1. On the other hand, if at decision block **416** the hashed messages are not the same, then method **400** instead proceeds from decision block **416** to block **420**, which illustrates recipient system **110** notifying recipient **112** that the received message is not valid and is not verified as being sent from user 1. Method **400** finally ends at block **422**.

As has been described, the present invention discloses a system, method, and program for managing a user key used to sign a message for a data processing system having an encryption chip. The present invention helps prevent unauthorized transactions and communications from occurring due to the CRL time-granularity problem. The present invention consolidates the encryption/decryption function at a centralized location. The present invention further discloses use of secure communication and a key revocation scheme to resolve the problems associated with centralizing the encryption/decryption function.

While the invention has been particularly shown and described with reference to a preferred embodiment, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that various changes in form and detail may be made therein without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. For example, although aspects of the present invention have been described with respect to a computer system executing software that directs the functions of the present invention, it should be understood that present invention may alternatively be implemented as a program product for use with a data processing system. Programs defining the functions of the present invention

can be delivered to a data processing system via a variety of signal-bearing media, which include, without limitation, non-rewritable storage media (e.g., CD-ROM), rewritable storage media (e.g., a floppy diskette or hard disk drive), and communication media, such as digital and analog networks. It should be understood, therefore, that such signal-bearing media, when carrying or encoding computer readable instructions that direct the functions of the present invention, represent alternative embodiments of the present invention.